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Agenda item 9

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Anatoliy G. KOUPRIYAN (Ukraine)

Chapter ___

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION OF NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY

(Agenda item 3)

1. The Chief of the New and Renewable Sources of Energy Section, Energy and Resources Branch, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the activities being carried out by the entities within the United Nations system in the field of new and renewable sources of energy (A/AC.218/1992/6). He stated that the activities of the entities covered the broad policy areas outlined in the Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy. Most of the activities had been categorized as supportive measures, while a lesser number related to technology transfer or resource transfer. Areas of concentration varied among the entities depending on the orientation of the organization in question and depending on the interest of the requesting Government. Substantial progress had been achieved in providing assistance to developing countries in assessing new and renewable

sources of energy resources, evaluating the technical feasibility of various technologies, strengthening national institutions, developing human resources, improving information flows, and developing databases and rural energy supplies. The progress achieved had not met with expectations, however.

2. The Chief of the New and Renewable Sources of Energy Section also introduced the report of the Secretary-General on progress achieved in the follow-up of substantive themes selected for detailed consideration by the Committee at its fourth and fifth sessions (A/AC.218/1992/8). The themes considered at the fourth session were (a) research, development and demonstration and (b) information systems in the field of new and renewable sources of energy. At that session the Committee had also considered the report of the Castel Gandolfo Colloquium of High-level Experts on New and Renewable Sources of Energy. With regard to information systems, consultations had continued, but so far no government had offered to fund and act as host to an expert group meeting, as had been suggested by the Committee at its fifth session.

3. The representative of the United Nations University (UNU) also made a statement in connection with the follow-up of the recommendations of the Castel Gandolfo Colloquium. Steps had been taken to implement the decisions of the Committee regarding the follow-up of the Colloquium. A pre-feasibility study on centres of excellence had been prepared as part of the collaboration between the Office of the Director-General for International Economic Cooperation, the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and the Italian Agency for New Technology, Energy and the Environment (ENEA), with the financial support of the Italian Government. Eight centres of excellence of international scope in the field of new and renewable sources of energy had been identified. However, their establishment as centres of excellence required the financial support of donor communities and international institutions. The contribution of the private sector in this context was also being examined.

4. At its fifth session, the Committee had considered the following themes: (a) contribution of new and renewable sources of energy to integrated rural development; (b) direct solar-to-electrical energy conversion; and (c) utilization of agricultural residues and urban wastes for energy production. In connection with the first theme, the Chief of the New and Renewable Sources of Energy Section informed the Committee that the full proceedings of the meeting of the United Nations Group of Experts on the Role of New and Renewable Sources of Energy in Integrated Rural Development, which had met in Stockholm in January 1990, had been published by ZED Books under the title Energy for Rural Development and would be distributed to all delegations. He also informed the Committee that, as had been recommended by the Committee during the fifth session, the full study on direct solar-to-energy conversion was being published by the United Nations under the title Direct Conversion of Solar Energy to Electricity and would be widely distributed.

5. Many delegations suggested that the Committee should discuss the terms of reference and define the framework of the proposed Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development that would, inter alia, assume the mandate of the current Committee. That would ensure continuity in programmes and activities for new and renewable sources of energy.

6. Delegations reaffirmed the importance of new and renewable sources of energy and stressed that the fundamental objective of the Nairobi Programme of Action was still valid. The basic premises of the Programme of Action underlined the need for an orderly transition from fossil fuels to increasing reliance on new and renewable sources of energy. The Programme of Action emphasized that the transition should take place in a manner that would meet the needs and options of individual countries and would be socially equitable, economically and technically viable and environmentally sustainable. Delegations noted that the waning interest of the international community in the follow-up to the Programme of Action and in the commitment of resources had, however, resulted in little progress in this area. They stressed that the renewed impetus for the development and utilization of new and renewable sources of energy - namely, the impetus provided by environmental concerns - should not divert the attention of the international community from the Nairobi Programme of Action's basic premises. Several delegations pointed out that since the adoption of the Nairobi Programme of Action, progress had been made in developing technologies to harness new and renewable sources of energy, and many were actually being adopted and applied in a number of countries.

7. Many delegations stated that the activities of the United Nations system in the field of new and renewable sources of energy had concentrated on support measures and that, from the point of view of developing countries, not enough had been done in the area of technology transfer. Even though international organizations in particular could potentially play an important role in facilitating the transfer of technology, promotion of technology transfer had been sporadic and the emphasis placed on new and renewable sources of energy in the United Nations system had not been strong enough. They noted that the United Nations could play an important role in helping developing countries meet their increasing demands for energy for development. They stressed that in order for world-wide development and utilization of new and renewable sources of energy to take place, technology transfer to developing countries would have to be on preferential and concessional terms, and proper financial flows would have to be realized.

8. Some delegations stated that the Committee had not lived up to the expectations of a decade ago. They expressed the hope that the proposed Committee would help the United Nations to address more effectively the issues relating to new and renewable sources of energy and overcome the obstacles the current Committee had faced in the past. They stated that the transition to a better energy mix, with a significant contribution of new and renewable sources of energy, would ease the effects of global warming while promoting economic growth.

9. Some delegations described the efforts being made in their countries to implement the Nairobi Programme of Action. Research, development and demonstration centres had been established. The importance of institution-building on national and regional levels was emphasized. Testing, standardizing definitions and exercising quality control were mentioned as important measures for encouraging market expansion. One delegation referred to a successful wind energy programme, to supply electricity that had both Government and private involvement. Local manufacturing of systems and training of operational personnel for the adaptation of new and renewable sources of energy technologies were also mentioned. Fiscal and other economic incentives were crucial for increasing the involvement of private industry in developing and utilizing these resources. One delegation said that the use of new and renewable sources of energy, especially in rural areas, had resulted in substantial conventional energy savings in his country. One delegation said that despite abundant conventional energy resources, new and renewable sources of energy had been identified as a solution to the energy needs of vast areas of his country and appropriate policies had been formulated and supporting institutions had been established. A number of delegations stated that North-South and South-South cooperation, as well as cooperation with multilateral and bilateral organizations, were important factors for the development and use of new and renewable sources of energy in their countries.

10. Some delegations underlined the unique role that new and renewable sources of energy could play in contributing to the solution of problems facing mankind, such as global warming and other forms of environmental degradation. These sources could also reduce pressure on finite conventional energy sources which have been relied upon for economic growth and development in the past.

11. The Special Coordinator introduced the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Solar energy: a strategy in support of environment and development" (A/AC.218/1992/5) and expressed gratitude for the generous support of member States, especially Sweden, in the organization of the United Nations Solar Energy Group for Environment and Development (UNSEGED). The Chairman of UNSEGED referred to the conclusions of the experts that the constraints on the development of new and renewable sources of energy were not technical but organizational and institutional in nature. The lack of a structural mechanism for implementing the Nairobi Programme of Action had resulted in a lost decade since the adoption of the Programme in 1981. He suggested that, at the national level, Governments should correct market biases against new and renewable sources of energy and the difficulties that small power producers faced in accessing electricity grids on reasonable terms. He emphasized that at the international level, new and renewable sources of energy had not been given priority by international institutions. UNSEGED had therefore recommended that a new international renewable energy agency be established with sufficient political and financial resources. That agency should be involved not only in promotional activities but also in establishing agricultural, transport, industry, housing and regional development policies. The creation of such an agency would be a strong signal that an increased role of new and renewable sources of energy was required to deal with the problems of environment, security and development.

12. Delegations commended UNSEGED for a stimulating and thought-provoking report. However, they regretted the late release of the documents in general and in particular the report on UNSEGED. Many delegations felt that they could not make extensive comments as there was not sufficient time to send the documents back to their capitals for full consideration.

13. Many delegations suggested that some of the recommendations contained in the document should be compiled, strongly endorsed and submitted to the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Such a move was considered important as it would not only give new and renewable sources of energy its rightful place in the debate on the environment but would also provide deserved impetus after the waning interest displayed by the international community in the last decade.

14. One delegation noted that the relevant section under Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, dealing with new and renewable sources of energy issues, fell short of an action-oriented format such as the one contained in the UNSEGED report. Therefore, the recommendations of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy, together with the UNSEGED report, could play an important role in the deliberations of the Preparatory Committee of the Conference. A few delegations stated, however, that they could neither endorse nor reject the recommendations contained in that report as that would require much further analysis and study.

15. Some delegations said that the recommendation to set up an international renewable energy agency needed more time for analysis and consideration. Adequate funding for such an agency had also to be investigated and secured. One delegation suggested that the recommendation should be left for consideration by the new expert committee. He added that the outcome of the Conference in June 1992 would greatly influence the creation of such an agency. A few delegations said that it would be the responsibility of the Conference to recommend such an agency. Subsequently they would request the new committee to play an important role in formulating the framework and mandate for the agency. A few delegations supported the recommendations concerning the lack of comprehensive institutional structures within the United Nations system's institutional structure in the energy field. They felt that such strengthening could evolve from the suggestion contained in the report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on New and Renewable Sources of Energy (A/AC.218/1992/9) and from any future recommendations of the Conference.

16. Many delegations concurred with the conclusion that the decade following the Nairobi Conference had essentially been lost because of the lack of political commitments and the absence of agreed upon targets quantifying objectives in the Nairobi Programme of Action. Progress had, however, been achieved in many countries in implementing the Nairobi Programme of Action where concerted cooperative efforts at the national and international levels had been realized. The recommendations stressing increased international funding for support to the implementation of national action programmes were

viewed as especially important. To ensure an environmentally secured present and future, the transfer of technologies on a preferential and concessional basis was considered particularly important. Many delegations also stressed the importance of not only providing additional funding for the transfer of those technologies as rapidly as possible but also for their implementation.

17. One delegation suggested that the Committee stress the complimentarity between energy efficiency and the development of new and renewable sources of energy when transmitting its comments to the Preparatory Committee for the Conference. A few delegations underscored the recommendations in the report dealing with the removal of subsidies and other biases for some energy sources so as to improve the competitive conditions for new and renewable sources of energy. They emphasized that other market development efforts should also be encouraged.

18. One delegation stated that one renewable resource that was already making a significant contribution to commercial energy supplies was hydropower. The delegation stressed that hydropower should be treated on equal terms with other renewable sources of energy and should be evaluated on the basis of the important role it played at present and the huge potential it had for the future, especially in developing countries. No distinction should be made between large- and small-scale hydropower as that was not the practice with other sources such as solar energy and wind. In view of the importance of hydropower in supplying renewable energy to the world, the delegation had supported the work of UNSEGED through organizing a symposium on hydropower and the utilization of waterfall energy in an environmentally sensitive world. The delegation suggested that the report of that symposium also be transmitted to the Preparatory Committee for the Conference, together with the entire report of UNSEGED.

Chapter ___

PROMOTION OF THE MOBILIZATION OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES REQUIRED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI PROGRAMME OF ACTION

(Agenda item 4)

19. The Chief of the New and Renewable Sources of Energy Section of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the mobilization of financial resources and inter-agency coordination (A/AC.218/1991/7). The hoped-for importance of consultative meetings for the mobilization of financial resources had not been realized and the practice had ceased after negligible donor interest. Decreasing interest at the national level in the industrialized countries was reflected in the fact that public spending on new and renewable sources of energy research and development had basically been reduced by 50 per cent over the decade. In the United Nations system, financial commitments were dominated by those going to hydropower, fuelwood and conservation, which included energy efficiency measures. The World Bank, the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) were the main funding sources. It was concluded in the report that funding at the national and international levels had declined in recent years. In the developing countries, funding had been scaled down in many cases because of competing demands that were perceived as more pressing. It was hoped that the perception that new and renewable sources of energy could alleviate global concerns about the environmental effects of conventional energy use would be reflected in the mobilization of much needed funding.

20. Many delegations expressed concern about the lack of progress in mobilizing financial resources at the national, regional and international levels. This was due to a lack of political commitment and agreed upon targets quantifying the objectives of the Nairobi Programme of Action. The lack of financial commitments and adequate institutional support by industrialized countries was viewed as particularly worrying. They supported the recommendations contained in several documents before the Committee concerning increasing international funding in support of the implementation of national action programmes.

21. One delegation noted that, in addition to the mobilization of additional international financial resources, it was also important for countries to mobilize domestic resources. It also stressed the importance of having a long-term view regarding the development and use of new and renewable sources of energy. New efforts should be undertaken to clearly quantify the magnitude of the funding needed also at the project level. New and existing mechanisms should be investigated through which resources could be mobilized. One delegation stated that existing resources should be used in a more reasonable way and concentrate on a few priority areas. Research and development centres should be set up where basic conditions already existed, and planning for the mobilization of financial resources for technical training should be improved.

Chapter ___

SUBSTANTIVE THEMES SELECTED FOR DETAILED CONSIDERATION

(Agenda item 5)

22. The Chief of the New and Renewable Sources of Energy Section of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the contribution of new and renewable sources of energy to decentralized energy systems and to specific multi-purpose medium- to large-scale applications (A/AC.218/1992/2). He stated that progress in the application of most of those resources, either large- or small-scale, had been limited, yet considerable advances had been made in a few countries in mini-hydro power, biogas plants, the use of agricultural residues and in geothermal energy. Much of the progress in the development and use of new and renewable sources of energy had been the result of government intervention rather than incentives to the private sector. Centralized new and renewable sources of energy systems, for example, large-scale hydropower and geothermal

energy, had been more successfully applied. Success had also been reported in large-scale solar and wind systems. He expressed the hope that technology activities and cost reduction in those systems could ultimately benefit the developing countries - through adequate access to appropriate technology. However, he stressed that the problem of developing countries in providing decentralized systems to rural areas still remained unresolved. There was a need for a longer-term perspective in the development and utilization of new sources of energy for both decentralized and large-scale applications. Possibilities for multi-purpose usage should be investigated and encouraged. He reiterated that growing environmental concerns might lead to increased development and use of new and renewable sources of energy. That would require increased financial flow from developed countries through bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes and to incentives for private enterprise investments.

23. He also introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the promotion of rapid and effective transfer of technology in new and renewable sources of energy to developing countries (A/AC.218/1992/3). He stated that there was considerable scope for transfer of technology in the field of new and renewable sources of energy. However, while many activities had been carried out, data received by the Secretariat on them were incomplete for an assessment of the general trend and the extent to which there was a decline in the transfer of new and renewable sources of energy technologies. He urged member States to provide the necessary data. He stressed that technology transfer should not be looked at in isolation but rather as part of an integrated policy framework that included many other developmental issues.

24. The Chief of the New and Renewable Sources of Energy Section also introduced the report of the Secretary-General concerning the activities in the United Nations system regarding the two substantive themes (A/AC.218/1992/4). He stated that a number of the activities had already been mentioned when considering document A/AC.218/1992/6. The largest number of activities relating to the substantive themes concerned solar energy, in particular photovoltaics. Other activities concerned wind, hydropower, biomass, including biogas, charcoal and fuelwood, and geothermal energy. Many entities have been involved, including the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development, FAO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP and the World Bank. The nature of involvement varied from country to country and technology to technology. With regard to technology transfer, the entities of the United Nations system had mostly been involved in promotional activities; there were few examples of actual transfer or joint ventures.

25. Some delegations noted the delay in the distribution of the documents relating to the substantive themes. Owing to the technical nature of the substantive themes, they stressed that documents should have reached them in good time for appropriate comments to be made by experts at their respective capitals. Delegations considered that their comments under other items had already covered the topics dealt with under the substantive themes. One representative described her country's experience with decentralized energy

systems and technology transfer. She pointed out the particular interest of her country in the development of demonstration wind farms on the Black Sea and in the Semenic Mountains. She stated that her country was ready to manufacture, under licence, medium-sized and large wind turbines. The same delegation suggested that her country and other countries from Eastern Europe be included in the proposed network of centres of excellence of international scope in the field of new and renewable sources of energy. The need for international and bilateral technical and financial assistance was stressed.

Chapter ___

COMMENORATION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADOPTION OF THE NAIROBI PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION OF NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY

(Agenda item 6)

26. The Chief of the Energy and Resources Branch of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs introduced the report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on New and Renewable Sources of Energy (A/AC.218/1992/9). He indicated that the preparations for the meeting, which took place in August 1991, had involved the mobilization of limited staff resources. Twelve technical reports, as well as a consolidated report, had been prepared by the secretariat. For one report, assistance was provided by the Government of Finland. There was also an evaluation of progress made in the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action and proposals for future action to accelerate its implementation during the 1990s. Thirteen high-level experts nominated by Governments participated in the meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. Eduardo Praselj (Venezuela), one of the main architects of the Nairobi Programme of Action.

27. The report consisted of five sections, namely, a review of the objectives and areas for priority action of the Nairobi Programme of Action; an analysis of energy trends during the 1980s and their impact on new and renewable sources of energy; an assessment of progress achieved during the 1980s for each of the energy sources, as well as an overall assessment in relation to total energy; an analysis of all technical, economic, social, institutional and environmental factors bearing on the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action; and recommendations for action at the national level and the international level.

28. He stated that in its recommendations, the Group of Experts, inter alia, emphasized that the main thrust of the Nairobi Programme of Action and its recommendations continued to be valid. However, an overall review of its priorities might be required to reflect the changes that had taken place in the past decade in such areas as energy, ecology, finance, economic growth and the state of application of new and renewable sources of energy technologies.

29. At the national level, the Group of Experts had urged the establishment of time-bound commitments on the share of new and renewable sources of energy in the overall national energy picture and through the establishment of targets to increase that share. At the international level, the Group of Experts recommended that the Committee be strengthened by convening a group of experts between each of the sessions of the Committee. The Secretary-General should be requested to organize a group of experts on new and renewable sources of energy at the global or regional level, as appropriate, to examine energy issues and possible priorities for consideration by the Committee. In that context, such a group of experts, at its first meeting, should examine energy issues and, if possible, set targets and make recommendations.

30. The Group of Experts called for the strengthening of United Nations Secretariat arrangements and indicated that one measure could be for Governments to be requested to second technical staff to the Secretariat. Finally, the Group of Experts called for additional assistance to the developing countries in financing, through multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank and UNDP, including possibilities through the Global Environmental Facility and support for economic and technical cooperation among developing countries.

31. Delegations commended the work of the Group of Experts on its valuable and comprehensive report. Many delegations suggested that the report of the Group of Experts should also be transmitted to the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development together with the UNSEGED report on an equal basis. One delegation said that the recommendations in the report carried more formal weight than the UNSEGED report, as it had been prepared by intergovernmental experts.

Chapter ___

MEDIUM-TERM PLANNING IN THE FIELD OF DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION OF NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY

(Agenda item 7)

32. The Chief of the Energy and Resources Branch of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs referred to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (A/45/6/Rev.1), as approved by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session. He indicated that Programme 20 (Energy) included six subprogrammes, namely: 1. Monitoring and analysis of global energy trends and prospects and their impact on development; 2. Promotion of energy exploration in developing countries; 3. Furthering the development and use of new and renewable sources of energy for implementation by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs; 4. Energy resource assessment and exploration; 5. Energy planning and management; and 6. Development and transfer of technology for exploiting critical energy resources for implementation by the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development. The secretariat noted that revisions to the medium-term plan might be

necessary after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Brazil in June 1992, and in the light of draft resolution A/46/L.57 on restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, which, once adopted by the General Assembly, would lead to the establishment of an expert committee to be entitled "Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development".

33. The Committee agreed with the secretariat proposal.